

CALIFORNIA ARCHITECTS BOARD
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC PLAN 2005

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INTRODUCTION

Effective January 1, 1998, the California Architects Board (Board) assumed responsibility for regulating the practice of landscape architecture in this State. Under the enabling legislation (AB 1546 – Chapter 475, Statutes of 1997), the California Legislature created the Landscape Architects Technical Committee (LATC), a technical advisory committee, which consists of five professional members. The LATC performs the duties and functions delegated to it by the Board.

The LATC assists the Board in the examination of candidates for licensure and, after investigation, evaluates and makes recommendations regarding potential violations of the Landscape Architects Practice Act. It is also charged with the duty of investigating, assisting, and making recommendations to the Board regarding the regulation of landscape architects in California.

The laws and regulations addressing the practice of landscape architecture benefit two primary categories of people.

First, regulation protects the public at large. The primary focus of a landscape architect is to create ways in which people can safely interact with their environment. The practice of landscape architecture means planning and designing the use, allocation, and arrangement of land and water resources through the creative application of biological, physical, mathematical, and social processes to safeguard the public. Landscape architectural services include:

- Investigation, selection, and allocation of land and water resources for appropriate uses
- Feasibility studies, formulation of graphic and written criteria to govern the planning and design of land construction programs
- Preparation, review, and analysis of master plans for land use and development
- Production of overall site plans, landscape grading and landscape drainage plans, irrigation plans, planting plans, and construction details
- Specifications
- Cost estimates and reports for land development
- Collaboration in the design of roads, bridges, and structures with respect to the functional and aesthetic requirements of the areas on which they are to be placed
- Negotiation and arrangement for execution of land area projects
- Field observation and inspection of land area construction, restoration, and maintenance

Second, regulation protects consumers of services rendered by landscape architects. The LATC helps consumers directly by providing information on the selection and hiring of landscape architects and by establishing regulations and enforcement/complaint handling procedures that protect consumers from incompetent and dishonest practitioners.

As marketplace conditions change, it is the role of the LATC to monitor and respond to those changes that impact the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Prior to the establishment of the LATC, an interim Landscape Architects Advisory Council held two strategic planning sessions in October and November 1997. At the completion of these sessions, the Council had defined its mission and vision statements, identified three key strategic issues, and had begun to identify specific goals in furtherance of its mission.

Legislative authority for the formation of the permanent LATC became effective on January 1, 1998. The LATC held its first meeting on April 16, 1998, at which time it evaluated the draft Strategic Plan developed by its predecessor and continued its refinement. At the completion of the April 1998 strategic planning session, the LATC had formally adopted its mission, vision, key issues, and prioritized its goals.

In all subsequent years, the LATC has reviewed and updated the Strategic Plan in response to changing conditions, needs, and priorities. At each session, the LATC has reviewed its progress on objectives over the previous year, updated the environmental scan in response to changing economic and technological climates, reviewed its mission and vision statements, and strategized to meet the challenges of the upcoming year.

This document reflects the latest round of planning and discussion.

The development of a strategic plan for the LATC is ongoing. Once the main elements of the plan are approved by the Board, the LATC develops specific action plans for each goal and objective, and continually monitors its performance in achieving them.

LATC EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

In developing its Strategic Plan, the LATC examines the external factors that impact the field of landscape architecture and the LATC's mission. Seven major factors have been identified based on perceptions and observations of LATC members and practitioners:

CHANGES IN PRACTICE

- Licensing on the rise
- Continuing uncertainty in the State economy
- Increasing emphasis on security, crime prevention, and anti-terrorism in public space design
- Increasing average firm size
- Fewer small landscape architecture firms; more large firms
- Continuing shortage of candidates and landscape architects, especially mid-career professionals
- Expanded use of contract labor
- Increasing liability, risk and exposure due to lawsuits; forensic landscape architecture is on the rise (further highlighting the landscape architect's role in ensuring public health, safety, and welfare)
- Greater need for writing, communication, business, and critical reasoning skills
- Increasing reliance on environmental and biological science as a basis for landscape architectural design
- Widening scope of practice and responsibilities; growing demand for landscape architects; increasing functional specialization; greater need for landscape architects with working knowledge of key technical areas, especially ADA, etc.
- Widening body of knowledge required to practice landscape architecture
- Increasing public and professional demand for specialty certification
- Potential increase in unlicensed activity
- Increasing complexity of building codes and standards affecting the practice of landscape architecture
- Greater cooperation between landscape architecture practitioners and academics
- Expanded use of sustainable design and development techniques
- Increasing demand for residential work
- A number of graduates with landscape architecture degrees elect not to pursue licensure
- Continuing shortage of landscape architects to meet market demands in California
- Increasing level of landscape architect involvement earlier in the planning process

PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION

- Increasing involvement as primary members of professional architecture and engineering consultant teams
- Increasing collaboration of landscape architecture, planning, design and engineering professionals

PUBLIC/CLIENT RELATIONS

- Greater public awareness of what landscape architects do
- Greater expectations for landscape architects to contribute to the public good, meet environmental quality goals, and garner community support

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- Increasing client expectations for cost control, timely project delivery, agency processing, etc.
- Increasing expectations of consumers regarding quality of life issues in their communities
- Increasing public interest in park expansion and development

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Greater emphasis on professional development and continued competency due to more stringent technical requirements, incorporation of scientific knowledge and new laws and mandates
- Growing number of landscape architects taking on more “environmental” responsibilities such as sustainable design, site hydrology, and environmental technologies; landscape architects in leadership or “prime roles” for these issues
- Segmentation of landscape architecture production, which impacts the integrity and quality of services delivered
- Rising cost of education

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Continuing/expanding use of technology (e.g., CAD, GIS, electronic plan checking, smart permits, etc.)
- Increasing use of outsourcing leading to practice without presence
- Greater use of technically-oriented professionals (especially for CAD and GIS) who may or may not be landscape architects
- Greater blurring of the lines of responsibility due to remote supervision of design production and non-licensed professionals working in technical capacities
- Greater reliance on computer-aided design and drafting increases the difficulties and complexities of design production and supervision and can lead to a false sense of confidence regarding quality of technical drawings

GOVERNMENT

- Continuing fiscal crisis in state budgets
- Greater number of government services being offered via the Internet (“e-government”)
- Increasing level of sophistication and expectations from local city councils and planning commissions concerning project life-cycle costs (especially maintenance and operations)

CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE

- Growth pressure throughout California places more emphasis on issues, such as urban/agriculture interface, water issues, toxins, transportation, transit-oriented development
- Transfer of wealth to baby boom generation (who have high lifestyle expectations and are seeking sense of place) and to Generation X
- Growing regionalization within California resulting in local areas wanting to create individual community identities

STRATEGIC ISSUES

While discussing the external environment, a number of strategic issues were identified by the LATC in the areas of education, examinations, professional qualifications, enforcement and safety, public and professional awareness, and organizational effectiveness. The LATC recognizes that these broader issues are interrelated and require focused attention.

EDUCATION

- Promoting continuing education for landscape architects
- Supporting accreditation of approved extension certificate programs
- Participating in the process of educating students so that they are properly prepared to practice safely upon licensure

EXAMINATIONS

- Evolving nature of the Landscape Architect Registration Examination (LARE) with respect to national and state requirements, expense, and pass rates

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- Understanding how the expanding scope of practice of landscape architects impacts education and regulation
- Articulating the requirements of contemporary landscape architecture practice in California
- Encouraging adequate candidate preparation for licensure

ENFORCEMENT AND SAFETY

- Enforcing rules and regulations
- Defining responsible control for landscape architects
- Conducting consumer complaint analysis
- Enforcing laws against unlicensed practice, including lapsed licenses, and identifying the impact of unlicensed activity on public health, safety, and welfare

PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS

- Expanding outreach to consumers and practitioners regarding laws and regulations affecting the practice of landscape architecture
- Enhancing professional relationships as they relate to regulatory issues [i.e., American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB)]
- Strengthening relationships with allied professionals, such as architects, engineers, and Building Officials, to ensure adequacy of LATC regulations and enforcement procedures
- Maintaining communication with licensees regarding current regulations and LATC matters

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

- Identifying potential future LATC members

MISSION

The mission of the LATC is to regulate the practice of landscape architecture in a manner which protects the public health, safety, and welfare and safeguards the environment by:

- Protecting consumers and users of landscape architectural services
- Empowering consumers by providing information and educational materials to help them make informed decisions
- Informing the public and other entities about the profession and standards of practice
- Ensuring that those entering the practice meet standards of competency by way of education, experience, and examination
- Establishing and enforcing the laws, regulations, codes, and standards governing the practice of landscape architecture
- Requiring that any person practicing or offering landscape architectural services be licensed

VISION

As a model organization for consumer protection, the LATC safeguards the public, protects and enhances the environment, and ensures quality landscape architectural services.

VALUES

The LATC will strive for the highest possible quality throughout all of its programs, making it an effective and efficient landscape architectural regulatory organization.

To that end, the LATC will:

- Be **participatory**, through continuing involvement with CLARB and other organizations
- Be **professional**, by treating all persons who interact with the LATC as valued customers
- Be **proactive**, by providing information and education to consumers, candidates, clients, licensees, and others
- Be **progressive**, by utilizing the most advanced means for providing services

GOALS

The LATC has established five goals as a framework for organizing the Strategic Plan.

REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Protect consumers through effective regulation and enforcement of laws, codes, and standards affecting the practice of landscape architecture.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Ensure that landscape architects are qualified to practice by setting and maintaining equitable requirements for education, experience, and examinations.

PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Improve professional and public awareness and understanding of the profession, and provide opportunities for constituency and professional input to the LATC's mission, activities, and services.

ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Strengthen effectiveness of relationships with related organizations in order to further LATC mission and goals.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Provide accessible and responsive quality service to consumers and licensees.

CONSTITUENCIES AND NEEDS

The primary constituency groups of LATC include the following:

| Constituency | Needs |
|--|---|
| Public (consumers/clients, users, general public) | Competent professionals Assurance of recourse Stewardship/environmental protection/safety Information on contracting with landscape architects |
| Licensees | Fair enforcement Regulation of practice High standards of competency and equitable licensing |
| Students | Information Coordinating with schools to communicate licensure and practice requirements |
| Candidates | Fair exams Timely response to requests Quality, accurate, and relevant information |
| Public Agencies (Building, Planning, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works departments) | Maintaining standards, regulation, and information Information on practice standards for landscape architects |
| Architects Engineers Landscape Contractors | Collaboration on joint efforts Clarity of responsibility |
| Legislators | Consumer protection Clear definition of standards |
| CLARB | Information and participation |
| Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) | Support and information |
| ASLA and the California Council of the American Society of Landscape Architects (CCASLA) | Regulation of profession and information |
| Educators | Information on licensure requirements and practice standards |

ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan is a dynamic framework for the many activities that the LATC performs in promoting and meeting its goals. The goals and objectives are assigned to committees, subcommittees, task forces, staff, or individuals, as appropriate, who create more detailed action plans in order to meet the goals and objectives set by the LATC.

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REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

GOAL: Protect consumers through effective regulation and enforcement of laws, codes, and standards affecting the practice of landscape architecture.

Ongoing Responsibilities

- Address consumer complaints in a timely and effective manner
- Analyze pattern of consumer complaint data to keep track of major issues
- Review and update the Landscape Architects Practice Act and Regulations to keep pace with changes in practice
- Maintain communication with licensees regarding the obligations and requirements of licensure
- Implement regulatory changes, as needed, to keep Practice Act up to date
- Maintain currency of Frequently Asked Questions on LATC Web site

| Objectives | Target Date |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Request LATC member appointment to the Board's Business and Professions Code sections (BPC) 5588/5589 Task Force to address settlement/arbitration award reporting requirements. | January 2005 |
| 2. Develop procedures for case review. | January 2006 |
| 3. Modify Complaint Disclosure Policy under California Code of Regulations section (CCR) 2608. | January 2006 |
| 4. Modify citation regulations, CCR 2630 and 2630.1, to implement new administrative fines. | January 2006 |
| 5. Monitor unlicensed activity with respect to BPC 5641 amendment. Report on results and determine appropriate action, if necessary. | January 2006 |
| 6. Use LATC outreach materials to address use of ASLA designation and other titles or terms. | January 2006 |
| 7. Review written contract requirements under BPC 5616 and propose amendments, if necessary. | January 2006 |
| 8. Monitor level of enforcement efforts and expenditures as a proportion of the LATC's total work effort. Propose changes, if necessary (Sunset Review Issue #6). | January 2006 |
| 9. Develop and implement Complaint Disclosure Procedures. | January 2006 |
| 10. Modify Rules of Professional Conduct under CCR 2670, as recommended by the Board and staff. | January 2006 |
| 11. Monitor Board's actions with respect to settlement/arbitration award reporting requirements and propose amendments to BPC 5678.5 and 5679.5, if necessary. | January 2006 |
| 12. Review definition of practice of landscape architecture under BPC 5615 and propose amendments, if necessary. | January 2007 |
| 13. Review all licensee requirements under BPC 5642, 5659, and CCR 2671 to ensure consistency. Propose amendments, if necessary. | January 2007 |

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

GOAL: Ensure that landscape architects are qualified to practice by setting and maintaining equitable requirements for education, experience, and examinations.

Ongoing Responsibilities

- Ensure access to the profession by providing a fair and equitable licensure process
- Ensure that exams are kept current and meet all legal requirements
- Educate licensees on specific practice issues in California
- Review and monitor LATC's role in landscape architectural education
- Review and make recommendations to revise the Landscape Architects Practice Act and LATC's regulations to reflect current practice
- Oversee the content, development, and administration of the California Supplemental Examination
- Coordinate with CLARB to ensure timely, effective, and fair examination administration

| Objectives | Target Date |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Prepare "guidelines" for meeting examination experience requirements. | September 2005 |
| 2. Conduct a California-specific task analysis. | December 2005 |
| 3. Identify examination eligibility issues and propose solutions (Sunset Review Issue #2). | December 2005 |
| 4. Create a standard format for preparing the UC Extension Certificate Program review reports. | December 2005 |
| 5. Implement Education Subcommittee recommendations with regard to community colleges and associate degrees in landscape architecture. | June 2006 |
| 6. Modify examination eligibility requirements under CCR 2620, if necessary. | June 2006 |
| 7. Identify variables that impact LARE pass rates. Track and maintain data. | June 2006 |
| 8. Update California Supplemental Examination based on California Task Analysis and CLARB studies. | July 2006 |
| 9. Investigate potential reasons for low examination pass rates and develop an appropriate response (Sunset Review Issue #5). | June 2007 |

PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

GOAL: Improve professional and public awareness and understanding of the profession, and provide opportunities for constituency and professional input to the LATC's mission, activities, and services.

Ongoing Responsibilities

- Maintain effective communication with LATC constituencies, including licensees, clients, general public, students, candidates, and Building Officials
- Continue ongoing dialogs with educational institutions
- Participate in consumer, public, and professional awareness events
- Continue to review and update the LATC Communications Plan and emphasize consumer and professional awareness
- Update written materials and LATC's Web site, as needed
- Maintain a presence at schools of landscape architecture to inform students about licensing requirements

| Objectives | Target Date |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Distribute letter clarifying scope of practice for landscape architects; identify target recipients. | April 2005 |
| 2. Develop landscape architecture scope of practice table / graphic and post on LATC Web site. | April 2005 |
| 3. Revise and update LATC Communications Plan to address the following target audiences: consumers, licensees, licensure candidates, public agencies, educational institutions, professional organizations, etc. | May 2005 |
| 4. Prepare LATC materials to be included with the Board's presentation to Building Officials. | June 2005 |
| 5. Review LATC collateral material to reflect new concepts and relevant message points. | January 2006 |
| 6. Prepare materials describing the LATC's role and function, targeting public agency officials, students and faculty, and the general public. | January 2006 |

ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

GOAL: Strengthen effectiveness of relationships with related organizations in order to further LATC mission and goals.

Ongoing Responsibilities

- Maintain working relationships with the Board and DCA
- Work with CLARB, Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB), and Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA) to influence the national examination and to ensure that California-specific issues are addressed
- Exchange information with organizations that will assist the LATC in the regulatory process, such as ASLA, CCASLA, AIACC, Building Officials, and engineers
- Maximize involvement in CLARB committees
- Conduct ongoing communication with CLARB regarding important policy issues and procedures
- Circulate information on key issues being discussed by collateral organizations

| Objectives | Target Date |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Request appointment of LATC member to the Board's Regulatory and Enforcement Committee. | April 2005 |
| 2. Identify and contact collateral organizations to initiate circulation of information on key issues being discussed. | April 2005 |

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

GOAL: Provide accessible and responsive quality service to consumers and licensees.

Ongoing Responsibilities

- Improve service to all constituencies through timely, cost-effective, and efficient operations
- Encourage licensee participation in the LATC
- Update LATC Administrative Procedures Manual on a regular basis
- Monitor legislation that impacts landscape architectural practice as it relates to the public health, safety, and welfare
- Monitor State budget conditions and maintain clear budget priorities
- Utilize former LATC members on LATC committees and task forces to maintain organizational memory and continuity

| Objectives | Target Date |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Create a master calendar of action items by due date. | April 2005 |
| 2. Develop and implement LATC volunteer recognition program. | June 2005 |
| 3. Develop a LATC committee member position description and orientation program. | January 2006 |
| 4. Create a LATC policy document to summarize current policies and serve as a reference for future policy development. | January 2006 |
| 5. Establish a review cycle for reviewing major LATC programs and projects. | January 2006 |

APPENDIX A

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

To support its strategic planning goals and objectives, the LATC conducts information and outreach activities. This plan presents key messages, existing communication channels, and preliminary strategies for improving external communications.

GOALS

The LATC Communications Plan seeks to achieve the following:

- Protect consumers and the public by providing education regarding the LATC's role
- Provide information to licensees regarding standards of practice and their legal and regulatory responsibilities
- Disseminate factual information in a timely manner
- Seek feedback to improve and measure overall operations
- Enhance consumer understanding of the landscape architecture profession
- Maintain consistent and quality outreach services
- Evaluate the success and effectiveness of the Communications Plan

AUDIENCES

The LATC provides information to six main audiences:

- Public (consumers/clients, users, general public)
- Licensees
- Candidates
- Public Agencies
- Schools (educators and students)
- Professional Organizations

MESSAGES AND KEY INFORMATION

The LATC Communications Plan will provide the following messages and key information to the six main audiences:

PUBLIC (CONSUMERS/CLIENTS, USERS, GENERAL PUBLIC)

The public needs information regarding the role of the LATC, the practice and regulation of landscape architecture, compliance with laws, and how and when to hire a landscape architect.

LICENSEES

Licensed professionals require up-to-date information to ensure compliance with the Landscape Architects Practice Act and other current laws. Important information includes:

- Enforcement procedures
- Updates and changes to laws and regulations
- Information that affects the public's health, safety and welfare

CANDIDATES

Candidates for examination need accurate and timely information regarding eligibility, costs, and the examination process. In addition, candidates need information in order to clearly differentiate between the LATC's and CLARB's roles.

PUBLIC AGENCIES

Public agencies need information regarding the role of the LATC, the practice and regulation of landscape architecture, the laws under the Practice Act, and the LATC's enforcement methods.

SCHOOLS (EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS)

Schools with landscape architectural programs and their faculty need to have current practice, licensure, and candidate information.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Professional organizations, including CLARB, ASLA, LAAB, and CELA, and other state boards, need to be kept informed of changes to the Practice Act and LATC activities which may impact their organizations and members. These organizations and the LATC need opportunities to exchange information.

ACTIONS

The LATC recommends the following actions:

Public

- Publish article(s) that clarify the practice of landscape architecture and the role of the LATC
- Review letter to television production company(ies) and distribute, if necessary
- Develop scope of practice table / "graphic" and post on LATC Web site

Licensees

- Communicate with licensees regarding awareness of current health and safety-related codes and regulations

Candidates

- Update, print, and distribute Candidate Handbook
- Prepare "guidelines" for meeting examination experience requirements

Public Agencies

- Review Consumer Guides for currency and distribute
- Develop and distribute scope of practice table / "graphic" and other materials that clarify the practice of landscape architecture and the role of the LATC

Schools

- Review CLARB presentation materials for currency and incorporate information into LATC outreach materials
- Contact program directors regarding LATC presentations during professional practice courses
- Update PowerPoint presentation
- Prepare licensure letter for students approaching graduation

Professional Organizations

- Review CLARB presentation materials for currency and incorporate information into LATC outreach materials
- Contact CCASLA regarding collaboration to clarify the practice of landscape architecture for public agency officials
- Attend conferences and meetings to clarify the practice of landscape architecture and the role of the LATC
- Explore opportunities to participate in panels and workshops

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

The LATC will utilize the following communication tools to reach the target audiences identified above:

- Web site
- Newsletter
- Candidate Handbook and handouts
- Consumer Guides (three)
- Committee participation
- Practice Act, rules and regulations
- Articles
- Joint meetings
- Media/PowerPoint presentations
- Licensure Posters
- Design Professions Chart